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ABSTRACT

This booklet discusses the collective power of collaboration among the three agencies that compose the Corporation for National Service (AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the National Senior Service Corps) and introduces the reader to a process of collaboration intended to strengthen existing services and to create new and higher-quality service programs. The process described includes orating, networking, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. Motivating factors covered include the need to maximize the use of resources and the need to work together in order to integrate system strengths, while barriers to the process include turf problems, lack of incentives, and the possibility of increased workloads. The section describing the PERC (Planning Effectively for Resource Collaboration) method of implementing collaboration covers assessment of needs, analysis of assets and priorities, fission (examining all the 'parts' needed), and fusion (pulling it all together). The booklet also shares a "converging streams" success story and provides suggestions for next steps and a list of eight resource organizations. (KC)

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LINKING LEARNING WITH LIFE

Converging Streams

The Power of Collaboration Among Service Groups

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Converging Streams

The Power of Collaboration Among Service Groups

by Sam F. Drew, Jr.

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Introduction

A leading investment group in the United States markets its approach through what it calls the "Lions' Rule." Simply stated, the Lions' Rule says, **"always use the strength of your partners."**

The business world of today understands the Lions' Rule as the way to increase productivity and create and market better products. In the past, companies that manufactured products found suppliers for the component parts. These component parts from various suppliers were then assembled into a finished product. The quality of the finished product depended on the quality and availability of the component products and the assembly process. Training and other support services for the assembly workers producing the finished product and for the workers in the plants producing the component products were separate. In fact, the involvement of one operation with another consisted primarily of contractual agreements, shipping, and receiving. However, in today's business world, this construct of business operation has changed dramatically for most industries. Yesterday's "suppliers" to a company are today's "partners," working together to achieve the best "solutions" to the needs of the marketplace. The emphasis on the term "solution" rather than "product" is a significant one.

A concrete example of this new business construct could be found in the operation of a leading automobile producer in the United States. Instead of relying on suppliers to produce and ship in component parts for its automobiles, the company has actively partnered with those suppliers. These new business partners have based their operations in the automobile manufacturer's assembly plants. Employees of the various supplier and assembly operations work collaboratively to produce a superior product carefully designed to meet customer needs. This collaboration results in lower costs and greater productivity based largely on fewer design and manufacturing problems.

Applied to the service sector, this new construct can work equally well, resulting in integrated systems that provide new or improved services through creative solutions to community problems.

The Power of Converging Streams

The Corporation for National Service is a vast nationwide network of people-to-people services. Each service can be compared to a stream, winding its way through the streambed of its service sector and generally doing what it was designed and created to do. However, we all know that the power of a stream pales in comparison to that of a river. Yet, a river cannot exist without the collective power of streams that feed into it. Each stream is significant and necessary for the particular work that it does. But there is a bigger job to be done than each can do alone. For that job, we need, as Harris Wofford wrote in the Winter, 1997 edition of *The Resource Connection*, "...a river deep and mighty enough to sweep away the obstacles to solving our most serious problems." We need the power of converging streams.

The Corporation for National Service provides unprecedented opportunities for good citizenship in our democracy, for young and old alike, through service to our fellow man. The creation of the Corporation in 1993 melded a number of existing service programs and established new programs to create three major service initiatives—AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the National Senior Service Corps. The Corporation for National Service works with governor-appointed state commissions, nonprofits, faith-based groups, schools, and other civic organizations to provide opportunities for Americans of all ages to serve their communities through these three major service initiatives. These initiatives create an unprecedented opportunity for alignment of services to increase the levels and quality of service.

Yet, much of the potential for that alignment of service programs goes unrealized due to the lack of a process to make that happen. While partnerships have developed across the country that move us toward this goal of service alignment, the goal is not fully realized. The real test for the accomplishment of this goal rests in the ability of these diverse service organizations to collaborate with one another to

align their services to meet community needs and actively seek ways to partner that realize increased levels and quality of service programs.

While each functions as a unique stream of service, providing the services and service opportunities for which it was designed, there is a tremendous potential if these streams are merged into a powerful river of service.

The purpose of this book is twofold: 1) to discuss the collective power of the streams of service through collaboration, and 2) to introduce you to a process for collaboration that can strengthen existing services and create new and higher quality service programs. The individual identity of the various streams of service is not lost in this process. Rather, each stream continues to do what it does best, and then combines what it does best with other streams to create our river of service.

For the purpose of this book, we will focus on the potential for collaboration among the three major service initiatives of the Corporation for National Service and a process for accomplishing this. Certainly many other organizations, providing many other streams of service, exist within each community; ultimately, the goal of a community would be to foster collaboration among all of these organizations. The process that is presented is an effective collaboration process that can, and should be used in other arenas. In other words, any service organization could spearhead an effort to collaborate with other agencies by using this process to align their services to more effectively partner to meet the needs of the community.

Wofford, H. (1997, Winter). "Streams into a River." The Resource Connection, 2, (3),1. Quarterly Newsletter of the National Service Resource Center, Santa Cruz: ETR Associates.

The Three Streams of Service

Since this book is focusing on the Corporation streams of service, let's begin by briefly reviewing these three streams.

AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps, the domestic Peace Corps, engages more than 40,000 Americans in intensive, results-driven, hands-on service. Most AmeriCorps members are selected by and serve with local and national organizations like Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and Boys and Girls Clubs. Others serve in AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), which focuses on coordinating and organizing service, rather than participation in direct service projects, and AmeriCorps*NCCC (the National Civilian Community Corps), where members are involved in direct service, but usually only serve for six-week stints on any one project. After their term of service, AmeriCorps members receive education awards that help finance college or pay back student loans.

Learn and Serve America

Throughout our nation, many schools are discovering the value of service learning through projects that link education and service. At the forefront of this movement is Learn and Serve America, which helps support nearly one million students from kindergarten through college who are meeting community needs while improving their academic skills and learning the habits of good citizenship. In addition to providing Learn and Serve grants to schools (kindergarten through higher education) and community-based organizations and scholarships for student service, the Corporation for National Service also promotes youth service through the National Service-Learning Leader Schools Program and the Presidents Student Service Challenge.

National Senior Service Corps

Seniors are one of America's most vital resources, offering a wealth of experience and energy. Through the National Senior Service Corps, nearly a half million Americans age 55 and older share their time and talents as Foster Grandparents, serving one-on-one with young people with special needs; Senior Companions, helping other seniors live independently in their homes; and volunteers with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), meeting a wide range of community needs.

Converging Streams: What, Why, and How

"Collaboration is a bedrock principle of national service. Getting a service program started requires working with diverse people and organizations in the community. Yet too often, service programs operate on their own, unaware of other efforts going on around them. If service is to become a major national force, then we have to put aside our differences and work more closely together."

(Harris Wofford, 1997)

The accomplishment of Harris Wofford's call for unity, for partnering among the service streams of the Corporation for National Service, would certainly strengthen service as a major force in our communities, our states, and our country. And increasingly we see examples of partnering. In my own state of South Carolina, numerous examples exist of how one stream of service partners with another to form an improved service delivery system, utilizing the unique strengths of each partner. But true collaboration is not easy to accomplish. We all need sound reasons to begin the process of collaborating with our fellow service providers. It is much easier to continue to do what we have always done.

People think of different things when they think of collaboration. Often collaboration is confused with networking, or cooperation among agencies. Collaboration, however, is much more than simply networking or cooperating, though both are components of collaboration. To understand what real collaboration is, one must view the level of interaction among groups or agencies along a continuum of interaction. The continuum might look like this:

- Orating–An individual dominating discussion with his or her ideas
- Networking–Exchanging information for mutual benefit
- Coordination–Exchanging information and altering activities for mutual benefit
- Cooperation–Exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources for mutual benefit

- Collaboration–Exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing the capacity of others to achieve a common purpose

Motivating Factors

Now that we know what collaboration is, the question can be asked, what might motivate us to reach out and partner with other service providers? Here are a few motivating factors.

- Our mission in national service is expanding, while government is shrinking. In the future there may not be government resources to support an expanded mission. We must look creatively at **existing resources** and make the best use of them, while at the same time exploring possibilities for new resources.

- Problems in our society do not exist in isolation. Many factors combine to create and perpetuate problems of drugs, decline of our schools, poor literacy, environmental deterioration, and all the problems facing children and youth. As Harris Wofford (1997) puts it, problems society faces "don't respect neat boundaries and program lines." It is reasonable, therefore, to think that these problems cannot be solved by agencies and service programs working in isolation. We all must **work together** using the Lion's Rule, and we must work simultaneously on the many factors that combine to create and perpetuate these problems.

- Collaboration strengthens each partner's work. In so doing, collaboration does not sacrifice the uniqueness of a particular individual or group. Rather it identifies the uniqueness as a strength and combines the strengths of each partner to develop new and creative solutions to problems. The resulting **integration of system strengths** does not usurp the work each organization was created to do. It integrates the uniqueness of each to address a particular need in the community that no one organization, working alone, can

adequately address. Thus, when the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) partners with service learning programs to provide intergenerational teams to help troubled youth, a system is formed that did not exist before the collaboration occurred—a system with the ability to address a problem uniquely and more comprehensively than the individual partners working alone.

Barriers to Collaboration

These collaborations do not come about by chance. They take leadership, commitment, hard work, and dedication to be achieved. Indeed, the barriers to the creation of collaborations are great. Here are a few to be considered:

- Turf problems come in many forms, but most often they are rooted in the lack of information about other systems and distrust of the interests and intent of other systems. Many organizations believe that by collaborating, the identity of their organization will be lost in the identity of another, perhaps larger or more politically powerful, system. A process for collaboration is needed which brings together diverse groups of service providers to talk through issues together and to develop understanding and trust of one another in developing new and creative solutions to the issues. David Matthews, President of the Kettering Foundation, suggests that five basic elements must take place in the context of the community. The community [service organizations] must come together to:

  1. Dedicate itself [themselves] to the continued education of the "whole" community. This cannot be left to chance.
  2. Share information and determine not just the facts, but what those facts mean in the lives of the diverse peoples who make up the community.
  3. Talk "through" issues together, not just "about" issues.
  4. Assess the interrelations of many interests and the long-term consequences of each possible action before implementation.

5. Embrace public leadership—the leadership of ideas and ideals—and do not be limited to political leadership alone.

- A lack of incentives for collaboration exists in most agencies. Agencies are not structured for collaboration. Strategic planning within the agency focuses on the agency's unique mission and fails to look holistically at the needs of a community and the many agencies that serve various aspects of those needs. Rewards and recognition are most often based on how well an individual or group contributes singularly to the agency's mission, not on how well the individual or group contributes to meeting the agency's mission by collaborating with other agencies to meet the interrelated needs of the community. Very few agencies actually build collaborative activities into an individual's or group's job description.

- The possibility of increased workload often inhibits collaborative efforts. With the lack of incentives for collaboration built into agency policy, collaboratives are most often accomplished by additional work on the part of an individual or group to reach beyond the agency's mission to connect with another agency. These individuals see this collaboration as a way of accomplishing their individual goals within their agency, but also know that the work they are doing takes more time and effort than if they were working strictly within their job descriptions. Most often, they work without any formal recognition from the agency they represent. Sometimes they even are restricted from doing collaborative work if there is not some buy-in from their superiors that the work will clearly accomplish the agency's mission and goal.

These are but a few of the reasons to collaborate and the very real barriers to collaboration. Collaboration takes effort, commitment, and high level administrative support from within each organization.

The Key Factors

In any design for institutional collaboration, several key factors must be considered:

- There must be fundamental change in how institutions relate to shared "customers."
- There must be long-term commitment to systemic change.
- Institutions need to learn about one another.
- There must be leadership and top level commitment to the process.
- A common philosophy must be developed among the agencies or groups.
- There must be shared expectations among the agencies or groups.
- Staff from all levels must be involved and must feel "ownership" in the results.

When the key factors are in place, then true collaboration can occur, despite barriers. The rewards of collaboration far outweigh the barriers, and none of the barriers listed are insurmountable. But collaboration cannot be left to chance. Because none of this is accomplished overnight, we must have a starting point for collaboration, and a well-conceived systematic process is needed to assure success. Such a process is discussed in the next section of this book.

How Do We Merge Streams of Service?

If you are convinced that there is great power for getting things done through merging the Corporation for National Service's streams of service, then the question arises, how do we accomplish this goal? As stated earlier, collaboration is not easy. It takes leadership, hard work, dedication, and persistence. But it also takes a process for systemic planning. It does not happen by chance. Most examples today of two or more Corporation streams of service partnering came from the vision of one group or individual to provide better service. Discussions of some kind were held, and the groups agreed to partner to provide a service. These examples abound and are perfectly good examples of collaboration. They provide testament to the desire of the Corporation service providers and groups to surmount obstacles and get things done. But think for a moment how powerful collaboratives could be if all the streams of service planned systemically. Taking the lead in this systemic planning could be the State Commission on National and Community Service. Perhaps the state plan would be the vehicle for this planning. Perhaps the state plan would call for collaborative planning as a central goal. Even if this does not occur at the state level, it can—and should—happen within communities. What process could be used to accomplish this level of systemic planning, and what would be the logistics of such a process?

The next few sections will discuss such a process. My example will show how the process can be applied to the three service initiatives of the Corporation. But the process is versatile, flexible, and adaptable. Once learned, it can be applied to a service stream of the Corporation and other community agencies. It can be applied within an agency to unite the various services of that agency. Once learned, it can be a powerful tool to bring about intra-agency and interagency collaboration focused on the unique needs of a community. The process is called Planning Effectively for Resource Collaboration, or PERC.

What is PERC?

PERC is a framework for planning and can be modified to adjust to the needs of different types of communities and agencies. The intent is to engage people in planning for alliances—to stimulate people to look for ways their programs can connect with other programs to strengthen service delivery. In so doing, existing services can be enhanced, and additional resources can be created. Future needs are identified and become a part of the budget planning process. A built-in support group is formed to encourage and promote funding agents to allocate sufficient resources to meet identified needs and to encourage agencies to create a system of rewards to foster collaboration.

PERC uses a mapping process that endeavors to link, across programs (within an agency) and across agency lines, services which are similar or which closely complement each other. The process is based on the development and analysis of a "target population - agency matrix" and a series of mapping exercises to explore the nature of the interagency relationships. PERC ends in an interagency action planning session.

Simply put, PERC is...

- A strategy or approach
- A focus on institutional change
- A better use of existing resources

PERC is about...

- Institutional/System Relationships—funding streams, confidentiality, common eligibility, reducing program fragmentation and duplication, learning about and supporting each other; and
- Service Delivery Relationships—integrated services, community-based, extended team, and placement and treatment.

Three assumptions guide the PERC process:

1. That each agency or organization is unique and effective in carrying out its own specific mission;
2. That many of these missions connect directly with the missions and activities of other agencies; and
3. That agencies and organizations, by working together, can maintain their own autonomy, individuality, and focus, and can accomplish more than would be possible if each agency continued to work alone.

The PERC Process

Any stream, group, agency, or organization can act as a convener to begin this process. However, as with any group process, it is best facilitated by one person. The facilitator should be familiar and comfortable with the process. He/she can be a member of the group, but someone outside the group with no vested interest is usually better. Either way, the facilitator should act as just that—a facilitator—and should not be viewed by any of the programs involved as biased toward any one program.

Assessment

Before you can know where to go, you must determine where you are and who else may already be addressing the issue(s) at hand. The purpose of the Assessment phase is to determine not only needs, but resources.

- Focus on an issue.
  Unless a specific issue is evident, it may prove worthwhile to utilize the America's Promise Goals around which to focus your efforts. The five goals point to the health and well-being of children. They are:
  1) an ongoing relationship with a caring adult,
  2) a healthy start,
  3) safe places and structured activities,
  4) marketable skills through effective education, and
  5) opportunities to give back through service.

- Assemble a core group of representatives in your community/state focused on the issue.
  This core group should involve representatives from streams of service/agencies that are active in your community and are known to focus on this issue. This initial group should be kept small—5-8 members.

- Conduct a community needs/assets assessment.
  To gain an understanding of how the community perceives the goals are currently being met, conduct an assessment through:

1) questionnaires, surveys, and nominal group processes of the general community;
2) meetings or interviews with other key human service and community leaders;
3) surveys of human service and community leaders.

These surveys should also bring to light other streams/agencies that have an interest in the issue.

Analysis

After assessing what exists, you must look beyond that to determine priority needs and community assets.

- ### Determine Priority Needs and Perceived Assets

  Based on the needs/assets assessment, determine a priority order of the needs in your community and what the community perceives as assets, or that which is already being done well. This does not mean that if some need is perceived as being met, that it may not continue to be a priority need. These priorities and assets can be gleaned from the assessment results and then through reaching agreement through a consensus process based on discussion, analysis, debate, and agreement.

- ### Construct Resource Matrix

  The matrix is a graphic compilation of the various service providers that have been determined to have a relationship to the issue. The horizontal axis lists the needs; the vertical axis lists the streams/ agencies. The matrix on page 16 is completed with numbers that could represent levels of involvement in the delivery of service to the target population: 3=much involvement, 2=moderate involvement, and 1=little to no involvement. This analysis is also based on results of the needs/assets assessment.

(The America's Promise Goals and the Corporation's streams of service will be used to provide an example of how this can be done.)

Sample Resource Matrix

Streams of Service/ Agency	An Ongoing Relationship With a Caring Adult	A Healthy Start for a Healthy Future	Safe Places and Structured Activities	Marketable Skills Through Effective Education	Opportunities to Give Back Through Service
AmeriCorps	3	3	3	3	3
AmeriCorps VISTA	2	3	3	1	2
AmeriCorps NCCC	1	1	1	2	1
Learn and Serve America	3	2	3	3	3
Retired Senior Volunteer Program	3	2	3	2	1
Senior Companion Program	1	1	1	1	1
Foster Grandparents Program	3	2	2	2	2

3 = Much involvement in delivery of service to the target population

2 = Moderate involvement in delivery of service to the target population

1 = Little or no involvement in delivery of service to the target population

- ### Expand Participation
  The assessment should help to make the core group aware of other streams/agencies that should/could be involved. Invite these agencies to participate. If the group has been expanded, review the Resource Matrix to reaffirm the level of involvement of each of the streams/agencies.

- ### Determine the Target Need
  While the desire may be to address many aspects of the larger issue (in this case, ensuring the success and well-being of children through the America's Promise Goals), it is important to concentrate on a single goal, pursuing others later. (In other words, don't bite off more than you can chew.) To determine the single goal which

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will be addressed, both the Resource Matrix and the determined priority needs and assets must be analyzed. Members of the group may place numbered stickers next to each of the goals to represent which goal they think should be addressed first, second, and third. The group should then engage in an analysis discussion, being asked the following questions.

- Which Promise Goals have a high degree of involvement from most streams/agencies?
- Which Promise Goals do not appear to have been adequately addressed by the streams/agencies?
- Are these Goals of highest priority in addressing the major problems in the community?

Fission

By definition, fission is the act or process of splitting into parts. In order to build a coherent, working model, you must first examine all of the parts and the roles they play. (For the purposes of providing a continuing example, it is going to be assumed that the group has agreed that the Promise they will focus on first is an ongoing relationship with a caring adult.)

- Determine Services Needed
  Now that the goal has been determined, the group needs to brainstorm the services that are needed to fulfill the goal. This list can be refined through discussion until a complete, but concise list has been formulated.

- Complete Walkabout Planners
  Each participating program completes a Walkabout Planner in which each stream/agency answers the following questions:
  - What does my agency do now to address this goal?
  - What else could we do with no new resources?
  - What could we do better with additional resources?
  - What barriers keep us from doing better?

Sample Walkabout Planners

DATA SHEET

Stream of Service/Agency: *Learn and Serve America*

Priority Promise Asset: *An ongoing relationship with a caring adult*

YELLOW	BLUE	GREEN	SALMON
What are we doing now?	What could we do better with no new resources?	What could we do better with additional resources?	What barriers keep us from doing better?
Recruitment of mentors Training Accessing facilities Identifying children in need Program assessment	Use other youth programs to recruit Use senior citizens Mentors to recruit mentors	More training Materials to build community support Small stipends for mentor expenses Provide meal for mentors	School policies Lack of support from some teachers Lack of understanding of the need of mentors

- Share Services and Barriers to Improved Services
  Each participant transfers the data from the Walkabout Planner to color-coded paper according to the color listed at the top of the Walkabout Planner. (Each sheet should also note the name of the stream/agency.) These are taped to the walls around the room and are shared verbally with the others. As the sharing takes place, interrelation, duplication, and gaps in service delivery will begin to be seen.

- Mapping Services
  Based on the information taken from the Walkabout Planner "Yellow/What are we doing now" data sheets that are now posted on the walls, the participants build a map of the services offered. In other words, data is now grouped by services rather than by program. All related services should be placed together.

Sample Service Map

Recruitment/ Selection of Mentors
RSVP
Foster Grandparents
Learn & Serve

Providing Mentors
NCCC
RSVP
Foster Grandparents
AmeriCorps

Matching Mentors
RSVP
Foster Grandparents

Monitoring Mentors
NCCC
RSVP
Foster Grandparents

Training Mentors
Learn & Serve
RSVP
Foster Grandparents
NCCC

Building Community Support
RSVP
Foster Grandparents

Identifying Children
Learn & Serve

Coordinating/ Funding
VISTA
Learn & Serve
RSVP
Foster Grandparents

Program Assessment
Learn & Serve
NCCC
Foster Grandparents

Accessing Facilities
Learn & Serve
Foster Grandparents

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- Reflecting on Service Map
  Participants should review the service map and enter into a discussion. Analysis of services should include:
  - What are the pluses and minuses that presently exist?
  - What is duplicated or where are overlaps?
  - What is missing?

Lists of answers to each of these questions should be formed.

- Further Define the Service Map
  There are two steps to further define the Service Map. The first is to further explain each service that the streams/agencies feel they can provide.

Sample Section of Service Map Showing Definition of Service

Training Mentors
Learn & Serve: developed for peer mentors
RSVP: developed for seniors
Foster Grandparents: developed for seniors
NCCC: developed for adults to mentor elementary children

The second step is for participants to review the "Blue/What else could we do with no new resources," the "Green/What could we do better

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with additional resources," and "Salmon/What barriers keep us from doing better" sheets. These sheets should be grouped around the corresponding "Yellow/What are we doing now" sheets.

Sample Section of Expanded Service Map

(salmon)

Lack of community knowledge of experience with mentoring —NCCC

(salmon)

Lack of understanding of need —L & S A

(yellow) Building Community Support

RSVP through service organizations, business

(salmon)

Lack of support from some teachers —L & S A

(blue)

Use other youth programs to recruit —L & S A

Foster Grandparents through senior centers, retirement communities

(green)

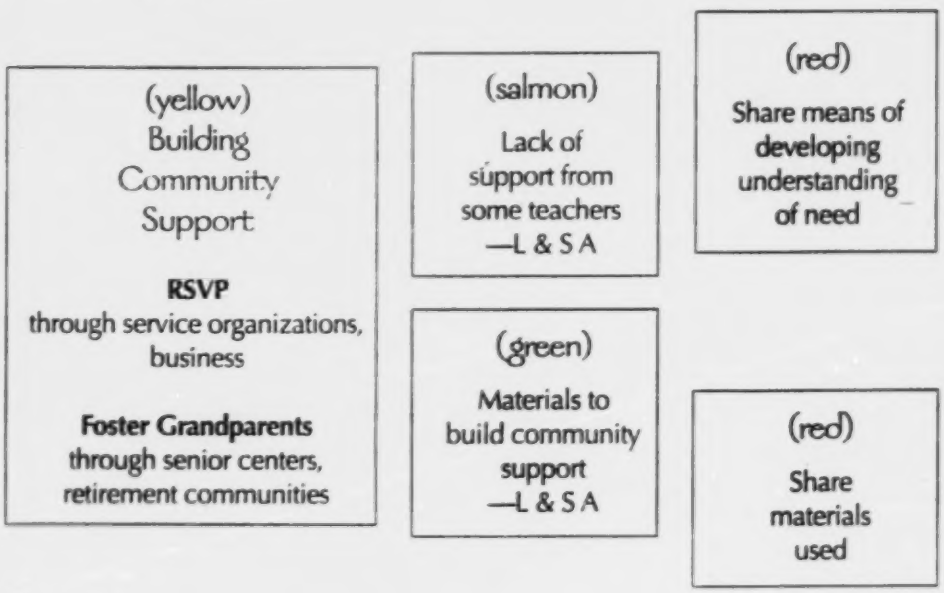
Materials to build community support —L & S A

To move the process forward, each stream/agency representative should reflect on his/her own program as it relates to the Service Map by asking:

- What could we do differently to better fit into the overall picture?
- Which activities do we have in common?
- How can we better meet the needs by coordinating our activities with those of other streams/agencies?
- What new structures, patterns, or collaboratives can be created to provide more/better services?

The participants can then create "Red/Bridging Cards" that begin to illustrate ideas for collaboration.

Sample Section of Expanded Service Map
With Bridging Cards



Fusion

By definition, fusion is the merging of different elements into a union. What is created is new and different, and tremendous energy is unleashed in the process. The Fusion part of the PERC process is intended to synthesize the data we have created into new service products or systems. It requires new, collaborative-type thinking to transcend barriers which normally prevent new configurations and new patterns of problem solving. This requires "out-of-the-box" creative thinking about new relationships. The melding of current services and providing support and affirmation between programs, rather than competition, creates energy and enthusiasm as common goals are reached through more efficient means of delivery.

- Develop Collaborative Action Plan (CAP)
  The new map and interconnections demonstrate what could be. To move from the present, the participating streams/agencies will need to develop a new plan of action based on collaboration and the interconnection of resources across the programs. Some questions that will need to be considered are:
  - How can we proceed collaboratively? (i.e., in-service training, technical assistance, hosting meetings)
  - What resources are we willing to provide? (i.e., personnel, equipment, materials, facilities)
  - What are the barriers that will have to be crossed? (i.e., program policy, hours of operation, use of facilities, lack of trust on the part of decisionmakers)

These must be considered when developing the plan, which should consist of a statement of goals, developing objectives to meet the goals, designing project activities, who is responsible, resources needed, and time frame.

- Integration of CAP Into Stream/Agency Action Plans
  After the CAP has been developed, each participant must review the CAP within his/her stream/agency and in relation to that stream's/agency's action plans. The participant should be able to demonstrate how the CAP supports the stream's/agency's goals. That stream's/group's internal management plan should then be altered to include the collaborative activities. In this way, the individual responsible is "charged" with the pertinent activities as integral parts of his/her work plan.

- Evaluation of Collaborative Action Plan
  A carefully designed evaluation is an integral component of a collaborative program design. The partners must be able to show that both the outcomes of the collaborative (goals and objectives of the plan) and the individual outcomes of the streams/agencies

involved in the collaborative are enhanced. Positive evaluation results will lend credence to arguments for merging streams and agencies with those who are skeptical. Begin your collaborative with goals that are achieveable and provide the success data through well-designed evaluation of your activities. These will become the building blocks for more and higher level convergence of streams/agencies of service.

A Converging Streams Success Story

Collaboration was defined earlier as two or more agencies sharing information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing the capacity of each other to achieve a common purpose. While examples abound of networking, cooperation, and coordination among Corporation streams of service, few examples exist of true collaboration. One example, however, that came out of the PERC process and meets the definition of collaboration advanced here is the Linking Intergenerational Networks in Communities (LINC) Project in South Carolina.

In 1994, two state agencies in South Carolina—Clemson University's Strom Thurmond Institute and the South Carolina Department of Education—came together with the common goal of creating capacity in South Carolina's communities to implement innovative, replicable intergenerational programs. Leaders in these agencies engaged in informal discussions about their common goal. It was decided that two other agencies might have similar goals and the group was expanded to include the United Way of South Carolina and the Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Aging. Using an outside consultant as a neutral party, these four agencies were led through the PERC process to form an improved service delivery system, utilizing the strengths of each partner. An ambitious Collaborative Action Plan (CAP) resulted from the process and provided the state partners with guidelines for meeting their collaborative goals and objectives.

The partners formed a governing board representative of each of the agencies to assure that the Collaborative Action Plan was implemented. Each contributed personnel and fiscal resources to the process, and additional resources were leveraged through private foundation funding. A statewide intergenerational project called LINC (Linking Intergenerational Networks in Communities) was created. The project addressed the common goal set by the four partners of creating local capacity to implement innovative and replicable intergenerational programs by focusing on bringing youth and older adults together to

form relationships and to meet local needs through service to the community. Additional resources were leveraged through the state's Learn and Serve Program. Seven communities across the state were funded to partner with AmeriCorps members and senior adult mentors from within the community and the National Senior Service Corps.

In addition to the focus on the core goal held by each of the LINC partners, the individual goals of each partner related to intergenerational programming were enhanced. Clemson University was able to expand its research efforts on intergenerational programs as well as enhance its ability to offer graduate students "hands-on" experience with these programs. The Department of Education was able to expand its service learning programs by adding an intergenerational component. The Office on Aging was able to increase participation of seniors from the senior centers it operates around the sate in community improvement efforts. Finally, the United Way was able to advance its goal of brokering services to improve community life and establish a statewide database that included information on senior citizens.

All of the agencies involved had commitment to the effort from senior staff. Each agency in the partnership built intergenerational activities from the Collaborative Action Plan into the job descriptions of personnel dedicated to the LINC Project. Personnel and fiscal resources were shared, and each agency contributed its unique strengths and expertise to the work plan. For example, the United Way placed a person in the Department of Education to work side by side with the LINC coordinator there. Each gave the other entré to their counterparts at the local level.

Ownership was fostered at the local level by engaging the seven community projects in PERC process planning to determine the specific needs and activities that would help their respective communities.

Training, monitoring, and technical assistance were provided by a team representing each agency.

The partners held regular meetings to discuss progress and address

barriers to the collaboration. Careful attention was given to building consensus, rather than voting, and this added to the feeling of ownership of decisions by each partner.

Finally, the partners focused from the outset on sustainability of the effort. At the end of the project, most of the local programs are continuing activities without the additional funds that were provided. The Department of Education has created an intergenerational section, and a permanent position has been hired. All partners will continue to meet on a regular basis to discuss and plan future activities and seek additional resources to implement those activities. A statewide intergenerational network has been established that did not exist before. Service learning in South Carolina now has an intergenerational component in projects across the state. The coalition established by LINC will last beyond the life of the LINC grant.

The LINC Partnership is committed to continuing efforts focused upon the infusion of the intergenerational concept, and using this knowledge to facilitate the development of a strong, effective, intergenerational network in South Carolina. Truly, a capacity for intergenerational programming has been established that would not have existed without this level of collaboration.

This project is an example of the power of collaboration to get things done. When agencies work together to address their common and individual goals, new ways of doing things emerge that provide better and higher levels of service to our communities.

Next Steps

Collaboration is not an easy process. It requires commitment, leadership, dedication, and hard work to accomplish successfully. Yet, as we have discussed earlier in this book, the rewards are great.

The PERC process is one tool that can help to begin converging the streams of service. The process is designed to be flexible so as to adjust to different situations and needs. In some situations, particularly after a group has worked together for some time, some of the steps can be skipped, others might prove unnecessary. The important part of the process is the thinking, sharing, and problem solving done by each individual in the group as part of a collaborative effort to improve/increase the delivery of services. PERC is only a planning process—a first step toward collaboration. Implementation of the plans developed will require continued collaboration among individuals and agencies involved.

Think of these points as you begin the process of converging streams:

- Begin an interagency approach by focusing on one relatively small, manageable topic or problem in order to experience success and to develop relationships and a common background of experiences on which to build a team which can work together effectively.
- Don't try to do too much too fast; trust and understanding develop slowly with mutually satisfying successes.
- An unbiased leader, with some planning expertise, must emerge to help guide the team through the early phases of cooperation toward a more comprehensive collaborative venture. Consider using the State Commission or a respected State Commissioner as a neutral convener for the group.
- Some external resources or pressures may be needed to help get an interagency group formed and operating at a reasonable level of proficiency. (Consider writing a mandate in your state plan for collaboration.)
- Someone must take responsibility for maintaining regular, ongoing communications and coordination—a particularly crucial function during the early stages of development. (Here again, the Executive Director of the State Commission or a respected Commissioner heading up a committee on collaboration might serve the purpose.)
- A little success goes a long way toward convincing those who initially harbor doubts to participate fully in a collaborative venture. (Evaluation plays an important role in this point.)
- The membership on a collaborative team should not be viewed as static. The interagency planning team might expand or contract depending on the issues or problems being addressed; however, it must have a common core of members to give continuity and focus.

Resource Organizations

- America's Promise
  909 N. Washington St., Suite 400, Alexandria, VA 22314-1556
  703-684-4500 www.americaspromise.org
- Corporation for National Service
  1201 New York Ave., NW Washington, DC 20525
  202-606-5000 www.cns.gov
  (To contact your State Commission on National and Community Service, Corporation State Office, or State Education Agency, log on to www.cns.gov, under Contact Information.)
- LINC (Linking Intergenerational Networks in Communities)
  SC Department of Education, 906 Rutledge Building
  1429 Senate St., Columbia, SC 29201
  803-734-8152 www.state.sc.us/sde
- National Dropout Prevention Center
  Clemson University, 209 Martin St., Clemson, SC 29631-1555
  864-656-2599 www.dropoutprevention.org
- National Service Learning Clearinghouse
  University of Minnesota, 1954 Buford Avenue
  Room R-460, St. Paul, MN 55108
  800-808-SERV http://umn.edu/~serve/
- Learn and Serve Training and Technical Assistance Exchange
  National Center–National Youth Leadership Council
  1910 West County Road B, Roseville, MN 55113
  877-LSA-EXCH www.lsaexchange.org
- Points of Light Foundation
  1400 I Street, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005
  202-729-8000 www.pointsoflight.org
- South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service
  1500 Hampton St., Suite 250B, Columbia, SC 29201
  803-253-7554

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About the Author

Dr. Sam F. Drew, Jr., a native of South Carolina, is director of the Office of Adult and Community Education at the South Carolina Department of Education. Dr. Drew has served in a variety of educational roles at the local, state, and federal levels, including Director of a countywide Dropout Prevention Program; Elementary School Principal; Special Assistant in the United States Department of Education; Deputy Director of the South Carolina Governor's Office of Education under former South Carolina Governor Dick Riley; Superintendent of Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, a state agency providing services for at-risk youth; and as county superintendent of schools in Union County, South Carolina. Dr. Drew has served for six years as a commissioner for the South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service.

Dr. Drew holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology, a Master of Education Degree in Elementary Education, and a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Educational Administration from the University of South Carolina. While Superintendent of the Union County Schools, he developed an interagency collaborative planning process called PERC (Planning Effectively for Resource Collaboration) which has been used successfully across South Carolina to initiate countywide collaborative service delivery systems to address problems of literacy. PERC has also been used successfully with the federal ACCESS project, addressing the needs of the homeless. More recently, Dr. Drew has used the PERC process with city development planners in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, to initiate a citywide collaborative delivery system of human services. Dr. Drew is married, has four children, and resides in Columbia, South Carolina.

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South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service
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